

YOU, THE CANDIDATE

by

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July, 2019

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This thesis investigates the relationship between graphic design and political campaigns with a focus on color and typography. The extent to which the general public identifies typeface and color palette characteristics is demonstrated by extensive past research studies. Findings from these studies and recent political campaigns are used to select six color and typeface combinations, which are then designed and applied to a political campaign. These surveys, designed to document the general public's perceptions of campaign design are distributed using Amazon MTurk to five hundred individuals nationally. Specifically, randomizing the release of campaigns across individuals reveals the relative influence of color and typeface on a campaign's signaling of political party and ideology. The survey also documents perceptions of kindness, trustworthiness, modernity and traditionality to these designed campaigns. The combination of graphic design, large-scale public dissemination and survey-based feedback introduces a data-driven design methodology that has the potential to improve and enrich the graphic design process for students, working designers and researchers. This research works in conjunction with a participatory installation that brings attention to creating design decisions and the influence of political design. The installation encourages involvement with the political process as participants create their own political campaign ephemera on a custom-designed application.

YOU, THE CANDIDATE

A Report of Creative Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Art and Design

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Art in Art

by

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July, 2019

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YOU, THE CANDIDATE

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DEDICATION

For the residents of The Zoo and those who have shared words of critique and encouragement within its walls and fences. You are invaluable to me.

Also for Jenny Venn: design queen, mentor and friend. Thank you for leading me to this yellow brick road that is design.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am continuously grateful to receive guidance from my committee members in many different styles. Gunnar Swanson for encouraging me to think both a mile wide and a mile deep. Dan Elliott for introducing me to letterpress, and Craig Malmrose for pushing me towards continuous improvement. Angela Wells for being a river of empowerment and opportunity. Cat for dreaming big on upcoming collaborations.

To my cohort and those I shared a studio with, both past and present. You have offered me perspective and support in ways I never knew I needed. To Gerald Weckesser and Judd Snapp for your patience and willingness to help when I so often needed it.

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Plates designed and photographed by Kayla N. Clark
All Plates are images of thesis work by Kayla N. Clark

CONTEXT

History

Throughout history, humans have communicated through an evolution of defined and refined by designers. The 15th century Germanic invention of the Gutenberg Press and the use of movable wood-cut or metal-cast type brought the rapid creation and distribution of printed materials throughout the Old World, and eventually, every continent.



Plate 1. Kayla Clark, *Blackletter 'k' in typeface: Fraktur*, 2019



Plate 2. Kayla Clark, *Serif 'k' in typeface: Caslon*, 2019



Plate 3. Kayla Clark, *Sans serif 'k' in typeface: Futura*, 2019

A typographic timeline can be established by evaluating characteristics and styles of typefaces. Fraktur, a blackletter-style typeface rooted in gothic handwriting and calligraphy is one of the earliest examples of a cohesive, manufactured typeface that was put to use on the Gutenberg Press (*plate 1*). The heavily ornamented character forms used widely throughout the 15th century transitioned into serif-style (*plate 2*). Serif-style, a style still popular today, displays remnants of handwritten characteristics while eliminating much of the blackletter-style ornament. The increased popularity and legibility of serif typefaces through the 18th century pushed blackletter into the position of headlines and eventually off the page.

Following the rise of serif-style was the streamlined, geometric letterforms of the sans serif style (*plate 3*). This style was an answer to the ornament of the 20th century Art Nouveau and Art Deco movements and sought to achieve an aesthetic unity following World War I (theartstory.org). Inspired by the De Stijl and Bauhaus movements sans serifs were developed and popularized extensively by German and Swiss typographers and graphic designers who drove the now-worldwide popularity of the International Style.

A 1932 essay by Beatrice Warde likens typography to a crystal goblet: the more minimal the awareness of the goblet, the more energy can be spent enjoying the wine. Warde wished to express the role of typography as an element that should remain neutral, even unnoticed, featuring the message content as the focal point (*Warde, 1961*).

Relevance

While the metaphor is on the correct track, there is much to be said about the occasionally-nuanced differences between typefaces and their importance. A short 85 years after *The Goblet* was published, a study determined that the average consumer in the United States was exposed to 10,000 brand messages each day (*Saxon and Veiga, 2017*).

Considering this landslide of information surrounding consumers, unique, memorable messages are vital.

Design writer and critic Ellen Lupton defines typography as “the tool for doing things with: shaping language, giving language a physical body, enabling the social flow of messages” (*Lupton, 2010*).

**FUTURA
BOLD**
vs.
**FUTURA
BOLD
OBLIQUE**

Plate 4. Kayla Clark,
*Futura bold vs. Futura bold
oblique*, 2019

Designer and calligrapher Brody Neuenschwander branched the printed word into two ‘levels of meaning’ (*Neuenschwander, 2004*). The first level of meaning is the *word image*, which conveys the idea of the word itself, the second level being the *typographic image* that is the ‘holistic visual impression’ interpretation of the word (*Neuenschwander, 2004*). To the non-designer, typeface choice is an unlikely consideration, but putting the typographic image to use is essential in conveying messages. The subtle slant of oblique character forms convey motion in contrast to

the relative motionless vertical forms of the regular characters. The typographic image of Futura Bold *Oblique* would better describe a boulder smashing down a hill than Futura Bold (*plate 4*).

A B C D E F G
H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V
W X Y Z

A quick brown
fox jumps over
the lazy dog.

Plate 5. Kayla Clark,
Harrington type sample,
adapted from (*Brumberger*,
2003), 2019

A study on the Semiotics of Typography shares the idea that ‘new typography’ should be a primary aesthetic consideration rather than a humble medium used to highlight content (*Leeuwen, 2006*). Visual communication researcher and educator Eva Brumberger administered a series of surveys to undergraduate students at New Mexico State University in an effort to determine rhetorical impact of typeface choice (*Brumberger, 2003*). Her study results presented compelling evidence that participants could consistently assign character traits to text and passages (*Brumberger, 2003*). Brumberger compiled 15 typefaces showing an A to Z sample along with ‘A quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog’ (*plate 5*) in an initial survey which were rated as elegant, direct or friendly (*Brumberger, 2003*). 15 passages of similar length and reading difficulty were then set in 12-point Times New Roman which were rated as professional, violent or friendly (*Brumberger, 2003*). The initial survey measured visual syntax (symbolic or stylistic traits) of the 15 typefaces while the second examined overall semantics. Brumberger’s study solidifies the theory that typographic image has underlying connotations that are interpreted uniquely by the style of applied typographic treatments.

Consider the typographic image of the General Electric (GE) and Samsung logos (*figures 1 & 2*). Both multinational conglomerates supply electronics and appliances in various forms, often competing with one another. GE, formed just under 50 years before Samsung in 1889,



Figure 1. Wolff Olins, *General Electric Logo*, 2004, goodlogo.com, goodlogo.com/extended.info/general-electric-logo-2489

features a typographic image that could be interpreted as handcrafted due to the use of rounded letterforms. The script characters G and E carry a handwritten but polished appearance.

While the typography in the Samsung logo also shows a streamlined and refined treatment, rather than a handmade quality, Samsung could read as futuristic with roots in technology. This narrative is drawn from the sharp apexes in the A, M and N, and the absence of the crossbar from the A.



Figure 2. Samsung, *Samsung Logo*, 1993, plusPNG.com, pluspng.com/samsung-logo-png-1747.html.

The contrast of the rounded GE letterforms versus the square Samsung letterforms create distinctive typographic images that drive intentional and subtle messages. The handcrafted quality reflected in the GE logo could signal a sturdy, dependable product, assembled with care and attention. The streamlined quality of the Samsung logo speaks to cutting-edge technology and efficiency. These messages and characteristics cater to different buyers and establish an expectation for the products.

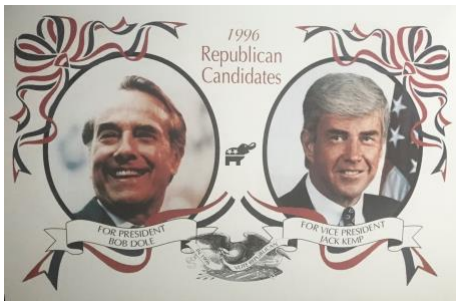
DESIGN + POLITICS

Graphic design and politics share an intricate and eternal bond. Political campaigns have evolved drastically with time, notably with the evolution and popularity of social media. As of 2014, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were growing in popularity as a preferred way to connect with politicians (*Anderson, 2015*). A significant amount of registered social media users admitting that they feel integrated personally into a political group and find information directly obtained from politician's social media feeds more reliable than alternative news outlets (*Anderson, 2015*). Although the media in which voters interact with political campaigns have changed, one constant set of factors remains: intentional use of image, type and color.

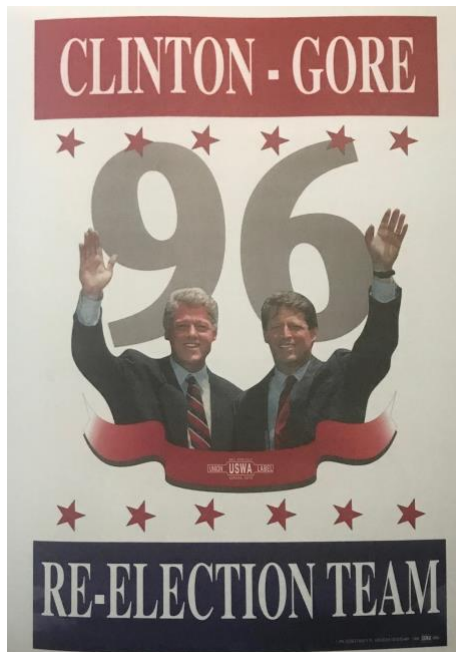
Studies on the image of political campaigns have, until recently, revolved around the visual symbol of the politician themselves rather than how the public receives campaign material (*Schill, 2012*). One of the most powerful elements of political communications is the sound bite – i.e., a short and concise message that often features a candidate offering a campaign statement. Similar to the sound bite is the image (or video) bite usually consisting of candidate-focused video footage that is deployed simultaneously with a sound bite (*Schill, 2012*). Use of image bites have increased in popularity accounting for 21% of coverage in the 2004 American presidential elections as compared to the 14% sound bite coverage (*Grabe and Bucy, 2009*). Image or video bites enable viewers to develop empathy for a candidate thus allowing potential voters to see the candidate as a real person with shared mannerisms, emotions and flaws (*Schill, 2012*). As image is the dominant mode of learning (*Barry, 2011*), use of image in political campaigns provides a powerful

opportunity to connect with and engage emotionally with voters where sound falls short (*Schill, 2012*).

An analysis of presidential campaign ephemera from Andrew Jackson's 1828 lithography campaign to Barack Obama's 2008 digital campaign reveals a departure from and return to type-centric campaigns (*The Library of Congress, 2012*). While image dominated the focal point of most ephemera in the first few centuries of United States campaigns, a clear transition toward bold, expressive, type-centric campaigns is apparent despite the importance of visually connecting with a candidate.



While use of images can create perceived, personal connections with voters, it also has the potential to alienate demographics. Heavily influenced by stereotypical depictions of race, gender and ethnicity in mass media, cognitive biases propel intergroup prejudice (*Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000*).



These prejudices, based on imagery of candidates, holds the potential to encourage or dissuade voters. An experiment by University of Chicago's Booth School of Business professors found that name-based racial discrimination is prevalent in résumés, one could suggest that such discrimination is also likely to confront political candidates (*Bertrand and Sendhil, 2004*).

In stark contrast to the emotional investment that imagery requires, typographic treatments can appease, impact, motivate or dissuade, without necessarily alienating, viewers.

The official posters for the 1996 Clinton vs. Dole campaigns

Figure 3. *Dole + Clinton Campaign Posters*, 2012, Presidential Campaign Posters from the Library of Congress

(figure 3) incorporate type and image but feature only one of these elements in their visual hierarchies, respectively (*The Library of Congress, 2012*). The Clinton poster features two elements in the visual hierarchy: the names 'Clinton-Gore' and the large '96'. The hierarchy in the Dole poster focuses on the headshots of candidate Dole and vice president nominee Kemp. The Dole poster features ribbons and eagle graphics represented in a photorealistic style while the major graphic elements seen in the Clinton poster enhance the headlines. While the Dole ribbons are quaint, they distract from the focus of the poster while the Clinton color blocks heighten the message. Political agendas aside, Clinton's prioritization of type may have resonated with voters who voted on ballots with names rather than faces.



Plate 6. Kayla Clark,
*Lowercase 'g' in Baskerville
and Comic Sans, 2019*

The role of the typeface in campaign communications has been historically stagnant. Robert Arnow, a San Francisco-based type designer, noted that most candidates choose fonts (sic) based on past trends (*Murphy, 2010*). Arnow says the trends are not daring, and risky type-based chances are not often taken (*Murphy, 2010*). A survey conducted by Errol Morris established a baseline for typeface credibility, randomly distributing treatments containing typefaces including Georgia, Helvetica, Trebuchet, Comic Sans, Baskerville and Computer Modern (*Morris, 2012*). The surveys resulted in Baskerville as the most credible typeface while Comic Sans was (unsurprisingly) the least credible (*plate 6*) (*Morris, 2012*). If typefaces can be used to prove credibility (*Morris, 2012*) and have identifiable character traits (*Brumberger, 2003*), it stands to reason that typefaces can also be used to persuade.



Figure 4. Sol Sender, *Obama Campaign Logo '08*, 2006, HuffPost, huffpost.com/entry/politics-meets-brand-desi_b_151317



Figure 5. *Americans Abroad for Obama*, 2008, Designing Obama



Figure 6. Cathy Wu, *Symbol of the Movement*, 2008, Designing Obama



Figure 7. Erin McDaniel, *Obama Modern Cross Stitch*, [etsy.com, etsy.com/listing/86055130/obama-modern-cross-stitch?ref=shop_home_active_22](http://etsy.com/listing/86055130/obama-modern-cross-stitch?ref=shop_home_active_22)

A notable change of pace to the political design landscape are the 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns of Barack Obama. The Obama campaign was the first of its kind to implement a professional design team consisting of 8 members in 2008 and growing to 20 for the 2012 election (*Thomas, 2010*). The design team expanded on the classic approach of campaign materials by creating scalable brand standards, but most importantly, cohesive, expansive design elements and templates that were available to the public for unlicensed use.

“At the height of the campaign, my daughter asked me if I could design a flyer for a friend's Obama benefit party at a little bar in Hoboken, New Jersey.

We took the text and reset it in Gotham, downloaded the O logo, and put it together in minutes.

“Wow,” my daughter said. “It looks like Obama's actually going to be there!”

- Michael Bierut,
Designing Obama

With the help of these accessible design resources, the general public had the opportunity to expand the campaign in a cohesive and professional manner, adding their own characteristics while adhering to the original graphic standards.

Using the Obama ‘O’ (*figure 4*) as a base, citizen-designed offshoots included organizations such as Beards for Obama and Americans Abroad for Obama. Beards for Obama transformed the ‘O’ into a gruff,

bearded chin, while Americans Abroad created a design inspired by passport stamps (*figure 5*). The popular Obama brand proceeded beyond design and was re-created through a gamut of media including baked goods (*figure 6*) and cross stitch patterns (*figure 7*).

This was the first large-scale application of participatory politics (Nam, 2016), a practice that has resulted in both influential and infamous citizen design. The ‘butterfly ballot’ of 2000, implemented by Palm Beach County (PBC) Supervisor of Elections Theresa LePore, is the face of

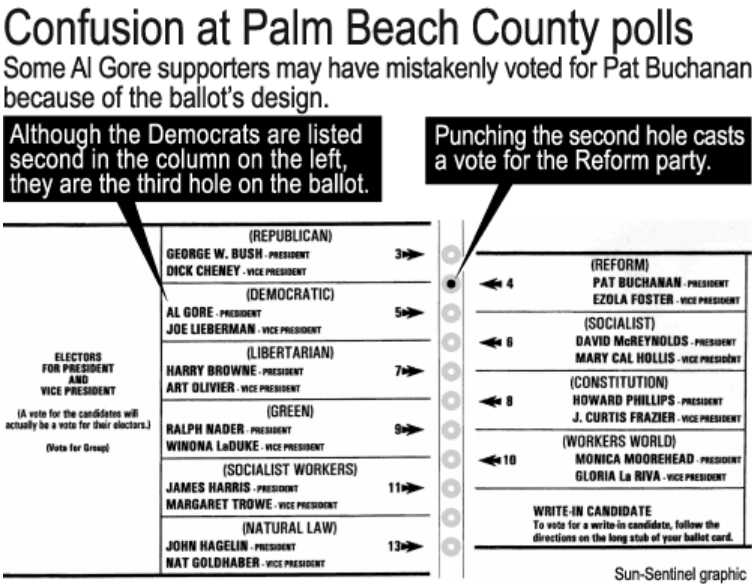


Figure 8. Sun-Sentinel, *Florida Butterfly Ballot*, 2000, [mit.edu, mit.edu/~jtidwell/ballot_design.html](http://mit.edu/~jtidwell/ballot_design.html)

poorly crafted citizen-design (Wand, et al., 2001). LePore, in an attempt to enlarge type to increase legibility, redesigned the PBC ballots and unknowingly influenced the entire presidential election as an estimated 2,800 votes intended for candidate Al Gore were designated to Pat Buchanan (figure 8) (Wand, et al., 2001).

A positive example of participatory politics was the significant, albeit unplanned, addition to the Obama campaign in the creation of the 2008 Hope poster by designer and street artist Shepard Fairey. Fairey, a fan of then-Senator Obama, was looking for an energetic yet patriotic way to raise awareness for the candidate. He created the famous ‘Hope’ poster in his personal style, the outcome being a stoic, powerful portrait of Obama with Constructivist undertones stationed above the word HOPE. Fairey has been credited with keeping Obama in the presidential race as his citizen-designed campaign of 4,700 posters was distributed immediately before Super Tuesday where the polls favored Hilary Clinton as the Democratic nominee (Scott, 2017).

The integration of intentional design within political campaigns was revolutionized by the Obama campaign, however, the campaign color palette was anything but unique. Most United States political campaigns are enveloped in a comfort zone of traditional red, white and blue color palettes with notable exceptions. Thomas Dewey made a presidential bid in 1944 with a bold yellow poster. Championed by the large, heavy phrase 'Well, Dewey or don't we', the poster accompanied an illustration of a benevolent elephant (*The Library of Congress, 2012*).

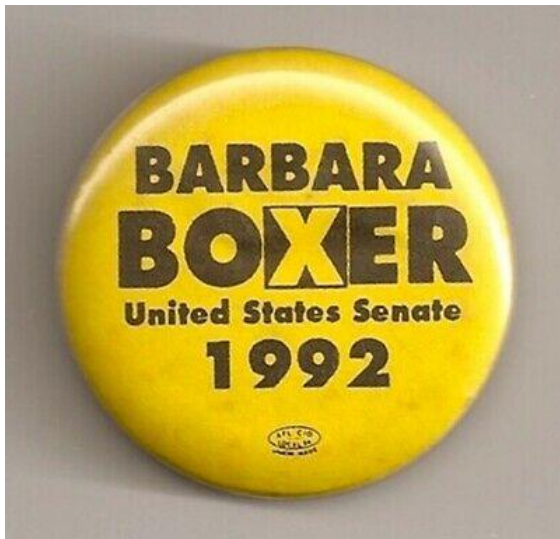


Figure 9. 1992 Barbara Boxer Campaign Button, 1992, picclick.com, picclick.com/1992-Barbara-Boxer-Campaign-Button-FIRST-US-SENATE-333149810333.html



Figure 10. 2010 Barbara Boxer Campaign, 2010, nytimes.com, nytimes.com/2010/10/31/fashion/31Noticed.html

Additional campaign graphics or posters that strayed from the norm include a purple, yellow, red and green psychedelic poster used by Robert Kenney in his 1968 presidential bid featuring a playful caricature of 'Bobby' (*The Library of Congress, 2012*). In 1988, Jesse Jackson's secondary campaign poster featured a flat, roughly hewn portrait of a solemn Jackson in black against a bright yellow background (*The Library of Congress, 2012*). Recent political campaigns have also seen unexpected color palettes. Barbara Boxer, a former state representative and senator for the state of California put the 'x' in her last name to use as a play on a 'vote' throughout several of her campaigns. Boxer also included the use of yellow including her 1992 (*figure 9*) and 2010 (*figure 10*) senatorial campaigns.



Figure 11. Tandem Design NYC, Ocasio Cortez Campaign Posters, 2017, crowdspring.com, crowdspring.com/blog/political-branding-marketing/

In the 2018 general election, candidate for New York State Representative Alexandria Ocasio Cortez ran a bold and distinctive purple and yellow campaign, featuring a memorable wordmark and a powerful three-quarter portrait of herself (*figure 11*). The campaign is rich with underlying messages. Yellow was selected to bring bright, energetic expression to the campaign, while purple reflects the mixing of red and blue candidates in the newly-elected congress (*Budds, 2018*). The upward momentum of the diagonal lines of type lends itself to positive motion, appearing reminiscent of the memorable Russian revolutionary propaganda. The exclamatory ¡Ocasio! wordmark, much like the O and MAGA from the Obama and Trump campaigns, became the tireless logo for the campaign. Ocasio opted for stars rather than rounded full stops on the exclamation marks, paying homage to the Puerto Rican flag and her heritage (*Budds, 2018*). Joe Crowley, 20-year incumbent to the caucus, ran a traditional and safe campaign against Ocasio, losing despite his experience and notable endorsements (*figure 12*).



Figure 12. Crowley Campaign Posters, 2018, crowdspring.com, crowdspring.com/blog/political-branding-marketing/

Politicians are faced with the challenge, similar to businesses competing over consumers for advertisements, to appeal to a larger voter base. In this way, candidates must transform themselves into fully-developed brands each campaign season. While deploying a campaign outside of the red, white and blue color palette can be risky, it hosts unique benefits

as well. Returning to the consideration that the average consumer within the United States is exposed to 10,000 brand messages each day (*Saxon and Veiga, 2017*). stepping outside of the patriotic color-comfort-zone not only seems trendy but also effective.

Campaign communication, roles of design within political campaigns and categorization of official campaign logos have been studied, but no studies have measured the influence of visual and textual elements of campaigns (*Doom, 2016*) on the public.

EXPERIMENTS + OUTCOMES

Research Question

How are voters influenced by typography and color choices in political campaign design?

Objectives

1. Determine which design traits are perceived to be associated with which political parties.
2. Determine the relative contribution of color and type in formulating individuals' perceptions of political party associations.
3. Identify the relative effectiveness of non-traditional to traditional political campaigns.

Methodology

My methodological approach begins with the design of six political campaigns using typeface and color choices motivated by historical design choices in political campaigns. A survey was then developed to measure individuals' perceptions of the campaign designs and to isolate the relative contributions of typeface and color choice to the formation of these perceptions (Obj. 1). The survey and accompanying campaign designs were disseminated using Amazon "Mechanical Turk" (MTurk) service, which crowdsources individuals to complete surveys based on uploaded material. Engaging the public in this way provides a mechanism to gauge broader perceptions of color and typeface choice used in the fictitious campaigns.

Coupled with the survey component, the Amazon experiment randomized type and color choices revealing whether individuals

typefaces identified with strong contrasting characteristics. The dark color palette was paired with Bookman to represent a 'traditional' political campaign (campaign A). The bright color palette and Gotham were paired to represent a 'modern' campaign (campaign B). The typefaces were then swapped to test the objectives, pairing Gotham with the dark color palette (campaign D) and Bookman with the light color palette (campaign E). A third color palette consisting of purple and orange was created to represent a wildcard or outlier campaign (campaigns C and F) and used both Bookman and Gotham typefaces. Two tints of light cream were added to campaigns A, C, D and F.

Several elements were designed for each campaign including a yard sign, website, mobile ad and campaign buttons. These items were created to represent the range of ways, both physically and digitally, voters interact with political campaigns. The name Carson Tacett was selected to prevent gender bias in the survey. The campaigns feature intentionally neutral designs, the type remains centered and expected across each sample. The goal of the elements was not to draw attention to the design, but rather to gauge perceived relationships between color and type.

MTurk was used to disseminate the survey to a broad range of participants. MTurk, named after a 1769 artificial intelligence ruse, acts as an online marketplace for workers to complete tasks and for requesters to gather data. MTurk is the anthropocentric response to upend the cycle of humans making requests of computers and allows humans to request real-time data, by way of surveying and task completion, from other humans. Content of requests posted on MTurk

varies from image identification and language translations to academic studies. Requesters can manage quality control by advertising tasks or HITs (Human Intelligence Tasks) to well-rated workers, or those who have achieved 'masters' status and by accepting or rejecting half-baked responses. The financial compensation for completing an MTurk task ranges per project with a minimum of \$0.01.

The goal of deploying the survey is to gain an understanding of how the public perceives design characteristics within political campaigns. The greater range of participants across the United States will tap into a more representative pool of potential voters and will be instructive for better understanding the role of type and color in campaign design and generalizing this result to campaigns nationwide.

The MTurk survey incorporates six designed versions of the campaign. The questions remain identical on all versions, but to prevent individuals from comparing campaigns against some baseline campaign, I revealed only one randomly-selected campaign to each MTurk worker. Further, the ordering of questions was chosen intentionally beginning with the broadest initial perceptions of the campaigns, such as the perceived ideology of the candidate, and delving into finer details about the campaign, such as its level of visual appeal. For this reason, MTurk workers will be prohibited from backtracking to earlier questions to prevent the exposure to later (and perhaps more subjective) questions from influencing their initial perceptions.

The six surveys correspond with campaigns A–F as outlined above. 500 HITS were completed within a span of 15 hours on July 23, 2019. Each

HIT earned \$0.01 and the average time spent on the survey totaled 1 minute and 27 seconds. Participants included 219 Democrats, 146 Republicans, 127 Independents and 14 who self-identified as Other.

Objective 1 Methodology

Determine which design traits are perceived to be associated with which political parties.

To gauge a first impression of the political party affiliation of campaigns A–F, the first two questions of the survey were developed.

1. Do you perceive the campaign to be associated with a Democratic, Republican or Independent candidate?
2. Where on the political ideological spectrum do you expect this candidate to be located?

These questions are overarching, allowing the worker to consider the relationship between the designs and political parties by aesthetics alone. These questions appear first in the survey to remain uninfluenced by the questions that will follow that may compel the worker to consider characteristic traits that an average voter may otherwise ignore.

Question 1 offers three options; Republican, Democratic or Independent.

Question 2 features a Likert scale allowing the worker to choose the liberal or conservative intensity of the campaign. This response was measured using a Likert Scale on the Qualtrics software that ranged from 0 (very conservative) to 10 (very liberal) with the center of the scale, 5, representing and labeled by “moderate”.



Plate 8. Kayla Clark, *Objective 1 Outcomes part i*, 2019

Expected outcomes for the survey include Campaign A identified as a Republican campaign and Campaign B identified as a Democratic campaign. It is also likely that Campaign C will be identified as an Independent or Democratic campaign. Color is expected to serve as a stronger predictor of political perceptions than type for campaigns D and E.

Objective 1 Outcomes

(plates 8 + 9)

Campaign A showed a strong result in this category and was perceived by 45.98% (5%—24.8% higher than alternate options within the same category) of workers as a Republican campaign. Campaign A pairs the dark color palette with a serif typeface and has aesthetic similarities to the recent Trump/Pence 2016 presidential campaign that may have influenced this result. Campaigns E and D were also perceived as Republican (40.96% and 37.35% respectively).

Campaigns displaying the bright color palette (B and E) were both perceived to best represent a Democratic candidate, regardless of the serif or sans serif type treatments accompanied by a strong result for Campaign D. Campaign B was perceived to be a Democratic campaign 43.53% of the time while Campaigns D (42.17%) and E (40.96%) trailed slightly behind. Democratic associations with campaign B and E suggests that the bright color treatment has more sway than

a typographic treatment. These close results of these design associations may speak to a level of design versatility present for Democratic campaigns that was absent from Republican campaigns.



Wildcard campaigns (campaigns C and F) were overwhelmingly identified as belonging to Independent candidates. Campaign F that boasted the sans serif type treatment was perceived as an Independent candidate by 50.59% of workers followed closely by serif Campaign A at 46.43%. This trend suggests that the wildcard color palette is effective in signaling an outlier campaign, regardless of the type treatment.









The sliding Likert scale revealed a small difference between Campaigns A and D (45.25%, 48.05%) signaling that these candidates were slightly more conservative than their counterparts. Campaigns C and E measured toward the center of the conservative/liberal scale at 50.7% and 50.16%. Campaigns B and F leaned towards the liberal end of the spectrum at 53% and 54.38%. While this may not seem like much variation, the 9.13% jump from Campaign A to Campaign F is worth investigating at a larger scale.

Plate 9. Kayla Clark, *Objective 1 Outcomes part ii*, 2019

Determine the relative contribution of color and type in formulating individuals' perceptions of political party associations.

To determine whether type or color is the stronger influencing factor on political party associations, the results from questions 1 and 2 are

compared. Campaigns A, C and E are also used as they all feature Bookman, the serif typeface. An apples-to-apples examination of color influence is conducted leveraging the fact that all respondents surveyed on campaigns A, C and E received the same typeface. For example, comparing responses from questions 1 and 2 above received in response to campaigns A (dark) and C (wild) reveals the relative contribution of color to perceptions of a liberal or conservative campaign (plate 10). The same pairwise comparison is repeated with campaigns A and E, and C and E. The responses to questions 1 and 2 will also be used to examine color effects from campaigns B, D and F in the same fashion. To test the relative influence of the typefaces, the same comparisons are repeated holding color as the constant factor rather than type. Campaigns A and D, B and E, C and F are all compared against one another, gauging whether workers perceive a stronger

CAMPGN.	TYPE	COLOR
A	Bookman	 Dark
B	Gotham	 Bright
C	Bookman	 Wild
D	Gotham	 Dark
E	Bookman	 Bright
F	Gotham	 Wild

relation of one campaign with a political party than the other. Together, these responses are used to compare the impact of color and type on perceived ideologies in terms of a Likert Scale of liberalness and conservativeness and by placing campaigns into perceived party “bins”, such as Democrats and Republicans.

Plate 10. Kayla Clark, *Reference Key*, 2019

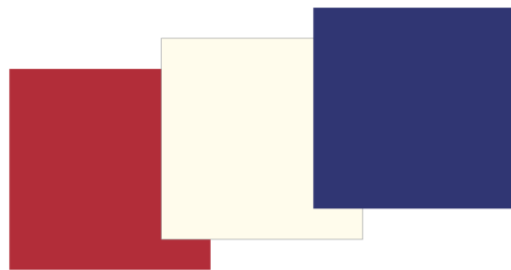
Objective 2 Outcomes

(plates 11 + 12)

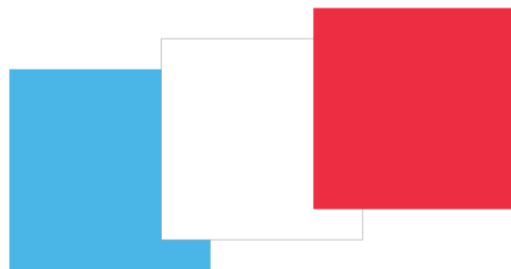
Contribution of color to political perceptions

Campaigns A, C and E, which all feature the serif treatment, were evaluated to isolate and examine the effect of color on political perceptions. Campaign E best signaled a Democratic candidate by 9.93%–14.77% more than campaigns A and C. A Republican candidate

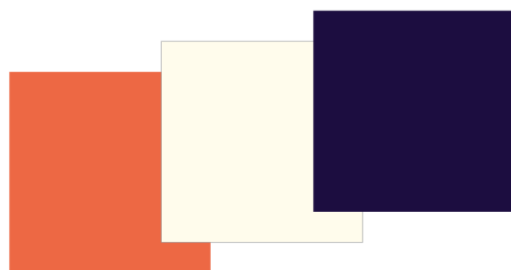
was best signaled with Campaign A by 5%–18.6% more than campaigns E and C. Campaign C showed the strongest swing and signaled an Independent candidate by 23.44%–28.36% more than campaigns E and A. When evaluating the Likert scale of conservative to liberal, Campaigns C and E read as 5.45% and 4.91% more liberal than campaign A.



MOST REPUBLICAN
(relative)



MOST DEMOCRATIC
(relative)



MOST INDEPENDENT
(relative)

Moving forward, the strongest results are evaluated rather than examining negligible findings falling in the 0%–6% range. The dark red white and blue color palette of Campaign A strongly signaled a Republican campaign, leaving the wildcard color palette of Campaign C far behind. In contrast, wildcard campaign C signaled an Independent candidate by a stronger result of 23.44%. These gaps suggests that a Republican candidate could use a wildcard palette to recruit from Independent affiliated voters and an Independent candidate could leverage Republican voters with a dark campaign.

Plate 11. Kayla Clark, *Objective 2 Outcomes part i*, 2019

To examine the contribution of color to political perceptions, using the same approach but with a sans serif typeface, I then evaluated campaigns B, D and F. Campaign B best

signaled a Democratic candidate by 1.36%–15.29% more than campaigns F and D. Campaign F, the campaign with the biggest swing in this category, was perceived as an Independent candidate by 24.71%–30.11% more than campaigns B and D. Campaign D best signaled a Republican candidate by 6.76%–16.17% more than campaigns B and F. Campaign F read as 1.38%–6.3% more liberal than campaigns B and D while campaign D read as 4.95%–6.33% more conservative than campaigns B and F.

Similar to the results seen in the above comparison for campaigns A, C and E, the dark color palette was perceived as Republican while the wildcard palette was overwhelmingly perceived as Independent. The same deduction can be made that these color palettes could be applied to entice or dissuade sway voters within or outside the Independent and Republican parties.

Contribution of typeface to political perceptions

Now, to evaluate the contribution of typeface to the formation of political perceptions, I compare bright color campaigns of which one contained a serif typeface and one contained a sans serif typeface. Here, campaign B is perceived to be 2.57% more Democratic, 7.81% more Independent and 10.37% less Republican than campaign E. Similarly, campaign B read as 2.84% more liberal than campaign E.

These results signal that the serif type treatment seen in campaign B would work well to signal a Democratic campaign and better to represent an Independent campaign but may not mesh well with a Republican campaign.

**CARSON
TACETT**

**MOST DEMOCRATIC
MOST INDEPENDENT**
(relative)

**CARSON
TACETT**

MOST REPUBLICAN
(relative)

Plate 12. Kayla Clark, *Objective 2
Outcomes part ii*, 2019

When conducting the same analysis for the dark color treatments for campaigns A and D, the serif typeface was perceived to be 8.63% more Republican, 2.51% more Independent and 11.14% less Democratic relative to its sans serif counterpart. Similarly, campaign D edged as 2.8% more liberal than campaign A when evaluated using the Likert scale.

When considering the wildcard color campaigns C and F, the serif treatment was perceived to be 6.2% more Republican, 4.16% less Independent and 2.05% less Democratic than the sans serif campaign. Although the sans serif treatment was perceived to be slightly more Democratic, it was also considered to be 3.68% more liberal than its serif counterpart, campaign F.

Overall, findings from the Likert scale aligned with political party affiliation and no outliers were strong enough to evaluate at this time. When the experiment is repeated on a larger scale, this could require re-evaluation.

Four robust findings in color category as compared to one in the type category suggest that color is a stronger treatment than type. This aligns with previously established expectations that the workers are more perceptive to color than typography. However, when used carefully, type could influence perception depending on the treatment, which is not completely insignificant.

Objective 3 Methodology

(plates 13 + 14)

Identify the relative effectiveness of non-traditional to traditional political campaigns.

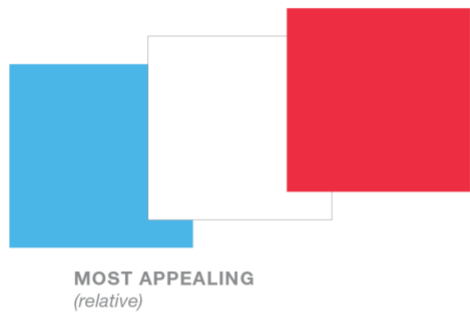
To identify the effectiveness of a more traditional campaign (campaigns A,B,D and E) to a non-traditional campaign (campaigns C and F), workers are asked:

3. How visually appealing do you find this campaign?
4. Would you vote for this candidate based on aesthetics?

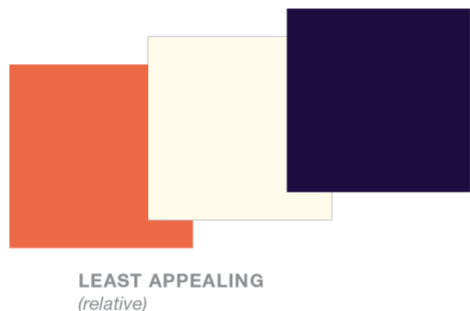
Workers will also assign characteristics to the given campaign, asking if they perceive the campaign as; traditional, modern, futuristic, classic, kind, harsh, bold/strong, light/demure and trustworthy. A comparison between results from more traditional campaigns (A, B, D and E) versus wildcard campaigns (C and F), specifically focusing on traits such as kind, harsh and trustworthy, indicates the effectiveness between these various styles.

Objective 3 Outcomes

Campaign B (53.87%) was perceived as the most visually appealing followed by campaigns A (50.28%), D (49.91%), F (48.85%), C (46.71%) and E (46.7%). This leaves both of the wildcard color palettes at the lower end of the 6 campaigns represented in the survey. This is likely a result of familiarity as wildcard colored campaigns are outliers in the political color spectrum.



**CARSON
TACETT**
MOST APPEALING
(relative)



**CARSON
TACETT**
LEAST APPEALING
(relative)

Plate 13. Kayla Clark, *Objective 3 Outcomes part i*, 2019

When eliminating the effects of type, the dark color palette of campaign A was 3.57%–3.58% more visually appealing than campaigns C and E. When evaluating campaigns B, D and F, campaign B which features the light color palette was perceived as 3.96%–5.02% more appealing than campaigns D and F.

Likewise, when comparing the relative contribution of typefaces across the same color treatments, the serif in campaign A was perceived as 0.37% more attractive than campaign D while campaign B was 7.17% more attractive than campaign E and campaign F was rated 2.14% more attractive than campaign C.

These results suggest that sans serif type is almost always more visually appealing than a serif across any color treatment. This is an important finding as candidates may only have a moment to grab the attention of a voter. Choosing the least offensive visuals (sans serif type with dark color palette) could lead to more support regardless of the candidate's political affiliation.

Contrasting my expectations, many workers did state that they would vote for a candidate based on aesthetic treatments alone. Campaign F garnered the strongest result (28.24%) followed by campaigns B and A (27.06%, 26.44%), campaign D (24.1%), campaign C (23.81%) and



Plate 14. Kayla Clark, *Objective 3 Outcomes part ii*, 2019

campaign E (15.66%). This suggests that a candidate *could* gain or lose 12.58% of votes by simply interchanging the aesthetics of Campaign F, which boasts the wildcard color palette and sans serif type, or Campaign E, which pairs the bright palette with serif type. The popular sans serif, when paired with a wildcard or bright color scheme, increases the likelihood of voting for a candidate due to the high visual appeal of each element while a serif only increases likelihood of voting when paired with the dark color palette.

Lastly, evaluating campaigns based on the character traits proved to be tricky. This section of the survey allowed workers to select as many or few characteristics as they wished, which resulted in a broad range of results. As expected, measuring trustworthiness and kindness was negligible, as these results ranged from 1.97% to 6.41%. In contrast, categories such as traditional, modern, classic and bold/strong show strong results topping at 30.92%.

The campaign perceived as most traditional by 2.25%–18.1% was campaign A, pairing the dark palette with serif type while campaign B (bright color with sans serif) was perceived as the least traditional. Campaign D also uses the dark color palette classified as the most classic by a range of 1.49%–11.07% while campaign B (bright palette and sans serif) was assigned as the least classic. Campaign B, closely trailed by Campaign F, was perceived as most modern by a range of 0.21%–11.76%, while in contrast, Campaign A was perceived as least modern. The bold/strong category ranges from a perception of 11.18%

(campaign A) to 19.87% (campaign B), suggesting that all campaigns were perceived as relatively strong/bold to one another. Campaigns E (10.87%) and C (10%), however, were perceived to be 4.23%–6.87% more light/demure than their counterparts with campaign F measured as the least light/demure.

Since many categories garnered minor feedback, it is difficult to state the relative effectiveness of campaigns C and F in comparison to the other campaigns based on these character traits. The overarching characteristics could be used by candidates to enhance or subdue their personal traits. If a candidate had extremely traditional views and appearance, they could heighten these traits by campaigning with deploying Campaign A and doubling down on their voting base, or they could potentially reach a different demographic by positioning themselves as extremely modern with Campaigns B or F.

PRESENCE

A physical extension of *You, the Candidate* took form as an interactive, participatory installation (*plate 15*). The installation drew inspiration from Jessica Walsh and Stefan Sagmeister's *The Happy Show* and Lou Dorfsman's *Gastrotypographicalassemblage*.



Plate 15. Kayla Clark, *Participatory Installation*, 2019

Objectives

1. Motivate participants to consider impact and subliminal messages of design elements and design relationships.
2. Create an installation that encourages participants to envision themselves as political candidates.
3. Learn and master Adobe XD, create and implement an application prototype.

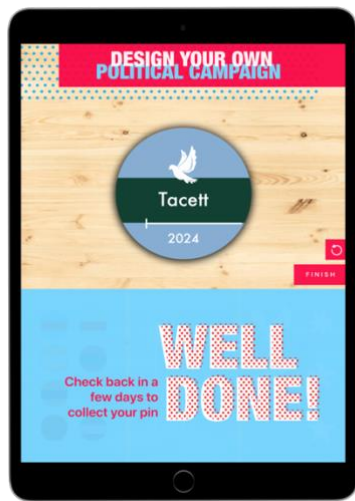


Plate 16. Kayla Clark, *Application Screens*, 2019

Rather than displaying the installation in a gallery space, I opted to position the installation in an area that received heavy foot traffic and reached a wide demographic. East Carolina University recently completed construction on a state-of-the-art student center that fit both of the necessary criteria. The space is populated by a large number of students, faculty, staff and community members throughout the day, lending to a variety of participants.

A secure, free-standing premium prime plywood structure meeting ADA requirements was designed and refined digitally before cutting on a tabletop CNC router. The structure consists of a large, flat panel with two stands and supports. Several mockups were created from paper, Bristol board and wood to ensure stability and correct proportions. The large plane features minimal directions prompting user interaction, 100 inset magnets, two iPad mounts and three-dimensional headline type. The main piece contains aesthetic design elements that speak to the graphics in the application. The colors were intentionally muted to woodgrain and black to feature the colorful application and custom campaign created from plywood rather than a sturdier material in coordination with the ephemeral lifespan of the installation

The custom application began as a written User Interface and User Experience (UI/UX) study to determine the content necessary to incorporate in the digital interface. A wireframe was

then developed to establish layouts that would later be filled with content. The wireframes were digitized and compiled with content using Adobe XD. Typographic formatting and digital elements were added after a UI/UX study. For enhanced functionality, Protopie was employed to create a fully-functional application prototype complete with actions, reactions, conditions and transitions. The final outcome was a streamlined, functional three-screen prototype that prompted participants to enter their name and select from a variety of colors and symbols to create their own campaign pin (*plate 16*).

The colors range from those used in the campaign design to non-traditional options that are likely to appeal to many tastes. Divider options, offered within this application interface and for implementation into the user-constructed campaign, include an ornamental line, a line with a perpendicular end and a flat line. Three avian options include a dove, a minimal stylized bird and a photographic illustration of a striking eagle as accents available in the user-created campaign. Participants also have the option to select from a group of geometric, sharp and blunt stars. Exploration and critical observation are encouraged in the prompt offered to the user to encourage non-arbitrary decisions. Each combination expresses a different message that is uniquely crafted by the participant. Each completed button design is recorded and later produced. After the buttons are produced, they are returned to the installation and attached to the installations built-in magnets for the user's later retrieval.

FUTURE WORK

The methodological blueprint adopted in this thesis offers an approach for assessing the relative contributions of type and color to the campaign perceptions of the public. Such an approach will serve as a basis for future investigations into the implications of campaign design choices. This body of research will continue with a second deployment of the MTurk survey to a larger group of participants using Qualtrics and Amazon MTurk. Here, future design experiments will redesign recent, memorable political campaigns with opposing color palettes and typographic treatments.

Further investigation on race and gender-based cognitive biases modeled after the name-discrimination study by professors Bertrand and Mullainathan applied to political campaign design is another avenue of interest, which may benefit from a platform that enables the gauging of public perceptions of design in a semi-controlled environment.

Finally, implementation of tools such as Adobe XD, Protopie, Amazon MTurk and Qualtrics in future curricula will provide students with competitive advantage in the workforce and as design-researchers. Rather than using a focus group which consists of few voices, or relying solely on peer feedback, students will be taught to use the power of MTurk to garner real time responses and feedback to test the effectiveness of their designs on an assigned or chosen demographics.

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APPENDIX

IRB Approval Letter

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 Call: 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 Call: 252-744-2284 · www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Kayla Clark
CC: Gregory Howard
Date: 7/23/2019
Re: UMCIRB 19-001861
You, the Candidate

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 7/23/2019. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category #2A.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

Study.PI Name: Kayla N. Clark
Study.Co-Investigators: Gregory Howard

